

are—would be way below the poverty line today. It is no wonder working people have to turn to the safety net of food stamps and all other kinds of things just to help them get by.

A recent study found that our taxpayers have to pick up the tab for millions of working families to the tune of about \$240 billion a year for food stamps, Medicaid/CHIP, earned-income tax credit, and temporary assistance to needy families. I wish to make it clear that these are not people sitting at home watching TV. These are people who work, but they are making minimum wage. What we want and what they want is not to have the Government and the taxpayers pick up the tab. They want to be able to support themselves with the jobs they have.

We have to rectify this. My legislation, the Minimum Wage Fairness Act, which I introduced—along with Majority Leader REID and Congressman GEORGE MILLER on the House side—will raise the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour in three annual steps and will get it above the poverty line by 2016 for the first time in over 20 years. That is what we are talking about—getting this minimum wage up.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Senate on both sides of the aisle sometime soon so we can bring this bill forward. I hope we can do it on a bipartisan basis and recognize it is indeed time to get families—working families—out of poverty by paying them a decent minimum wage.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). The Senator from Washington.

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, last night President Obama laid out an optimistic vision for a great nation that must never stop working to become even greater.

When the President gave his first State of the Union in February of 2009, our economy was losing over 700,000 jobs a month. Wall Street firms had collapsed and taken Main Street businesses with them and economists were not sure how deep it would go or if it would tip from a great recession into a true depression.

Families across the country were huddled around kitchen tables talking late into the night trying to figure out how they were going to stay in their homes or send their kids to college or even put food on their table. People who had gone to work every single day of their adult lives and had not had to update their resume in 20 years didn't know how they were going to pull their lives together if they got that pink slip. Workers who had jobs they thought were secure were panicking knowing that if things continued to go wrong, nobody was truly safe.

A lot has changed in 5 years. It has not been perfect. It certainly has not been smooth. We were not able to do

nearly enough, and we still need to do far more.

Last night President Obama was able to talk about the progress we have made since he inherited the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression. He was able to talk about the 46 months of straight private sector growth, about an unemployment rate that has come down from dangerous heights. He talked about the work that still remains to help millions of workers still trying to get back on the job.

He articulated a vision not just for bolstering our still fragile economic recovery but also for continuing the great American tradition of leaving our children with a stronger nation than the one we inherited from our parents—a vision of a country that makes sure every child has an opportunity to work hard, contribute to their community, and succeed to the best of their ability. He spoke of a country that doesn't just have economic growth at the top that may or may not trickle down but that has broad-based prosperity built from the middle out and a vision of a country that offers workers and families the stability and security they expect when they put in a lifetime of hard work.

President Obama talked about ways he is going to make this year a year of action, and I know that is what the American people are expecting. Some of that will come through executive action and public-private partnerships, but a lot of what we need to do depends on us in Congress.

Over the past few years Congress has been lurching, as we all know, from crisis to crisis, stumbling from one artificial deadline to the next, and too often engaging in petty partisan bickering instead of solving problems for the families we all represent.

At the end of last year, House Budget Committee Chairman PAUL RYAN and I worked together to show the American people it didn't have to be this way. When we sat down together in a budget conference that Democrats had been trying to start for 7 months, we faced an awful lot of skepticism. Many people were hoping we could reach a deal and avoid another crisis. However, they were far more confident that this budget group would not succeed where so many others had failed.

Chairman RYAN and I decided to listen to each other. We searched for common ground and we made some compromises. We knew we were never going to agree on everything, but we didn't think that should mean we couldn't agree on anything. We wanted a deal, not a fight, and we were able to put partisanship aside to do the right thing for the American people.

Our 2-year budget deal was a step in the right direction. We proved that bipartisanship was possible in this divided government, that Democrats and Republicans could break through the bitterness and rancor and work together and reach an agreement. That

deal rolled back the damaging across-the-board cuts and prevented a government shutdown. It moved our country forward, but we can't stop now because the vast majority of Americans understand our economy simply is not working the way it needs for people like them.

We need to do more to expand economic opportunities for the families and small business owners and communities across the country who are looking to us to get this right. They see the wealthiest Americans and biggest corporations continue to take advantage of an unfair Tax Code filled with special interest loopholes and giveaways. They see fewer and fewer opportunities for workers to find a job or earn enough for a stable middle-class life or send their kids to college. They watch as their government cuts back on critical investments in long-term and broad-based economic growth, and they want more than partisan bickering from their elected representatives. They want real action.

We will spend a lot of time over the next few months talking about many of the policies President Obama talked about last night, but I wish to focus on a few he mentioned that impact women and their economic opportunities in particular.

We need to face the reality that working women across the country—and working moms in particular—are struggling to find work that pays a living wage at a time when they are balancing being both the breadwinner and caretaker in so many families. When we talk about creating opportunity in America, we need to focus on the fact that women continue to be paid 77 cents for every \$1 a man earns, and they make up two-thirds of all minimum-wage workers. We need policy changes that focus on all workers but also help women catch up if we are truly going to create economic opportunity that expands the middle class and strengthens all of our families.

I was very glad to hear President Obama announce last night that he will be raising the minimum wage for Federal contractors. We need to build on that to give millions more women and men in this country access to a raise and make sure that working hard and having a job is rewarded. This is something we will be moving on in Congress in the near future, and I am hoping Republicans decide to put politics aside on this and work with us to get this done.

I was also very glad to hear President Obama double down on his commitment to a national preschool initiative that would not only help our youngest children and pay dividends in future economic growth but would empower millions of women who would be able to go to work and give back to their communities. This is not just a policy for me, it is personal. It is what got me into politics in the first place, and it is something that has driven me ever since.

As a former preschool teacher, I saw in my own classroom that when young children get the attention they need early, they will be miles ahead of their peers on the path to success. I saw the students I had who had been taught to simply raise their hand to ask a question or stand in line to go to recess; they were the ones who were more prepared to tackle a full curriculum when they got to school.

It is not just my personal experience. Study after study after study has made it clear that beginning to educate our children at an early age means they will be less likely to be held back, less likely to require special education, less likely to engage in criminal activity, and ultimately they will be more likely to graduate from high school and earn more.

Investing in preschool is overwhelmingly supported, and it is supported by the American people. In fact, the most recent polls show that over 80 percent of Americans believe we should pursue this across the country. It is strongly supported by the many people who truly understand the impact it will have on the ground.

I have talked to law enforcement officials who said they believe that early education is the key to reducing crime. Business and innovation and education leaders have seen the long-term impact that investing in early education has on our children and on our communities. We have to make these investments in our children and our future and Congress needs to act. Every day we wait is another opportunity lost. These are just a few of the policies President Obama talked about that I am ready to get work on.

The President also talked about the clear need to reform our immigration system, support our veterans and our wounded warriors, reform our bloated and unfair Tax Code, and invest in our Nation's infrastructure priorities. The American people are now expecting their elected officials to work together to tackle those issues, and many more, over the coming months and years.

I am at the table. I am ready to build on that bipartisan foundation we laid with the budget deal, but I am very worried that while the President and many of us in Congress are talking about working together to move the country forward, we have some Republicans who are already talking about dragging us backward into another needless crisis. That is absurd. We went through this just a couple of months ago. There is no reason for Republicans to put this country through this again.

Republican leaders proved at the end of last year that they were not going to actually follow the tea party off the cliff and let the government default. After a lot of drama and partisan posturing and economic pain for millions of families, Republicans dropped their demands and joined Democrats to reopen the government and avoid a default.

Republican leaders have said they are not going to let the country default

this time either, but they now seem unable to stop playing games with this issue to make the tea party happy.

I will be very clear on the floor: Democrats are not going to negotiate over whether the government should pay its bills. If the Republicans continue down this path of empty threats and taking hostages and dangerous demands, they will get exactly what they got last time they tried to play politics with our economic recovery—nothing.

I call on my Republican colleagues to stop working on a wish list of debt limit demands and hostages and stop thinking about the new threats they are going to make to our economy and to the American people and join us at the table to work on the real issues we need to address.

Democrats want to work with Republicans to tackle our challenges fairly and responsibly. That is what the President talked about last night. It is what we are here to talk about today. But as Chairman RYAN and I showed just a few months ago, the way for both sides to get what they want is through compromise and negotiation, not hostage-taking and not threats.

The American people expect us to work together. They want more deals and fewer fights, and I know Democrats are ready to get to work. I am hopeful Republicans will work with us to make this year of action in Congress a reality.

Thank you, Madam President. I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

THE FARM BILL

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I was privileged to be in our capital city of Des Moines 2 days ago, on Monday, January 27, and I was privileged to visit a lot of my friends in the Iowa legislature. I was in the Iowa House on Monday morning when a resolution was brought up by Representative Dan Muehlbauer and read and adopted unanimously. It was a resolution requesting the U.S. Congress to immediately enact a new Federal food, farm, and jobs bill. I won't read it all, but ultimately I will ask unanimous consent to have this resolution printed in the RECORD. The resolution basically points out how much a farm bill means to our fellow Iowans.

The resolution states:

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives—

That is the Iowa House of Representatives—

that with the reconvening of the United States Congress after its holiday recess, the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate should enact a new food, farm, and jobs bill with all possible speed but no later than January 31 of 2014.

I guess the good news I have now for Representative Muehlbauer and his colleagues on both sides of the aisle in the Iowa legislature is that we heard them. Under the great leadership of Senator

STABENOW, we now have a farm bill ready to come to the floor after the House passes it, I hope sometime today. We hope to have it on the Senate floor maybe as early as tomorrow—if not, the first of the week—to get the job done. I think everybody has signed off on it. It is a good farm bill. It has taken a long time and a lot of hard work to get there, but a lot of good people worked together on both sides of the aisle in both the Senate and in the House to get it done. So I thank Representative Muehlbauer and his colleagues for holding our feet to the fire and sending us this resolution.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD House Resolution No. 102.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 102

Whereas, the United States Congress regularly establishes agricultural and food policy in an omnibus farm bill in a bipartisan spirit of cooperation, exemplified by the federal Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, Pub. L. No. 110-246 which originally was to expire in 2012, but was extended by the 112th Congress in the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012, Pub. L. No. 112-240; and

Whereas, a new food, farm, and jobs bill is critical to maintaining a strong agricultural economy and an abundant food supply that benefits all Americans, including by providing programs relating to farm commodity support, horticulture, livestock, conservation, nutrition assistance, trade and international food aid, agricultural research, farm credit, rural development, bioenergy, forestry, and innovative strategies to revitalize this nation's rural economy by creating jobs in small towns and rural communities; and

Whereas, in Iowa, agricultural producers have faced a multitude of disasters, including drought, flood, and blizzard conditions which have been alleviated by disaster assistance under farm bill programs; and

Whereas, during 2013, the United States Senate and House of Representatives have been engaged in prolonged negotiations to enact a new food, farm, and jobs bill that is now in conference committee which is considering differences between the Senate version, titled the Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act of 2013 (S. 954), and the House version, titled the Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management (FARRM) Act of 2013 (H.R. 2642); and

Whereas, without the passage of a new food, farm, and jobs bill the United States will be subject to previously enacted permanent law, including commodity price support statutes effective in 1949; and

Whereas, the prolonged delay in passing a new food, farm, and jobs bill has created uncertainty for agricultural producers and will negatively impact the nation's overseas trade; and

Whereas, without the immediate passage of a new food, farm, and jobs bill consumers will increasingly suffer economic consequences; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That with the reconvening of the United States Congress after its holiday recess, the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate should enact a new food, farm, and jobs bill with all possible speed but no later than January 31, 2014; and be it further